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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

WAR YAWP

America!
England's cheeky kid brother,
Who bloodily assaulted your august elder
At Bunker Hill and similar places
(Not mentioned in o u r history books),
What can I tell you of war or of peace?
Say, have you forgotten 1861?
Bull Run, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg?
Your million dead?
Tell me,
Was that the greatest time of your lives
Or the most disastrous?
Who knows? Not you; not I.
Who can tell the end of this war?
And say, brother Jonathan,
D'you know what it's all about?
Let me whisper you a secret—we don't!
We were all too fat with peace,
Or perhaps we didn't quite know how good peace was,
And so here we are,
And we're going to win. . . .

It's fine to be a soldier,
To get accepted by the recruiting sergeant,
Be trained, fitted with a uniform and a gun,

War Yawp

Say good-bye to your girl,
And go off to the front
Whistling, "It's a long way to Tipperary."
It's good to march forty miles a day,
Carrying ninety-one pounds on your back,
To eat good coarse food, get blistered, tired out, wounded,
Thirst, starve, fight like a devil
(*i. e.*, like you an' me, Jonathan),
With the Maxims zip-zipping
And the shrapnel squealing,
And the howitzers rumbling like the traffic in Piccadilly.

Civilization?—

Jonathan, if you could hear them
Whistling the *Marseillaise* or *Marching Through Georgia*,
You'd want to go too.
Twenty thousand a day, Jonathan!
Perhaps you're more civilized just now than we are,
Perhaps we've only forgotten civilization for a moment,
Perhaps we're really fighting for peace.
And after all it will be more fun afterwards—
More fun for the poets and the painters—
When the cheering's all over
And the dead men buried
And the rest gone back to their jobs.
It'll be more fun for them to make their patterns,
Their word-patterns and color-patterns.

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And after all, there is always war and always peace,
Always the war of the crowds,
Always the great peace of the arts.

Even now,
With the war beating in great waves overhead,
Beating and roaring like great winds and mighty waters,
The sea-gods still pattern the red seaweed fronds,
Still chip the amber into neck-chains
For Leucothea and Thetis.

Even now,
When the *Marseillaise* screams like a hurt woman,
And Paris—grisette among cities—trembles with fear,
The poets still make their music
Which nobody listens to,
Which hardly anyone ever listened to.

The great crowds go by,
Fighting over each other's bodies in peace-time,
Fighting over each other's bodies in war-time.
Something of the strife comes to them
In their little, high rock-citadel of art,
Where they hammer their dreams in gold and copper,
Where they cut them in pine-wood, in Parian stone, in wax,
Where they sing them in sweet bizarre words
To the sound of antiquated shrill instruments;
And they are happy.

War Yawp

The little rock-citadel of the artists
Is always besieged;
There, though they have beauty and silence,
They have always tears and hunger and despair.
But that little citadel has held out
Against all the wars of the world—
Like England, brother Jonathan.
It will not fall during the great war.

There is always war and always peace;
Always the war of the crowds,
Always the great peace of the arts.

Richard Aldington